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In February 1861 an important confrontation took place at Apache Pass in southeastern Arizona which would have both short and long-term ramifications on Chiricahua Apache-American relations. This episode, the Bascom Affair, had as its two principals Lieutenant George Nicholas Bascom, a courageous officer inexperienced with Apaches, and Cochise, a Chiricahua chief of the Chokonen band, probably about fifty years of age. Simply stated, Bascom arrested Cochise and several members of his family for a raid and kidnapping of a child. Cochise, innocent of the crime, cut his way out of Bascom's tent and escaped to the hills. The next day he captured one stage employee, whom he offered to trade for his relations. Bascom adamantly refused, insisting as a condition of any exchange that the chief return the captured boy, who Cochise, of course, could not produce. Bascom's indiscretion let the situation get out of control. Cochise attacked a stagecoach and a freighter train, capturing three more whites and killing several Mexicans. A few days later he inexplicably tortured to death his four American prisoners before disbanding into Sonora. When Bascom and his party came across

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what remained of the four Americans, they retaliated by hanging Cochise's male adult relations, who included Cochise's brother, Coyuntura (Kin-o-tera), two nephews, and three other warriors.[1]

The Bascom Affair marked the beginning of open warfare between Cochise and the Americans, although not the beginning of hostilities. Relations between the two races had been strained for well over a year before the fateful incident. To blame this Bascom incident for the following decade of war, as Cochise and others have maintained, is a gross oversimplification.[2] There were other important factors that contributed to the longevity of the so-called Cochise War of 1861–1872, not the least of which was the military's inability to subdue the Chiricahua leader. But as one prominent historian wrote, even if the Bascom incident had not occurred, "there doubtless would still have been an Apache war."[3]

Cochise had been one of the leading Chokonen warriors throughout the 1840s and 1850s and, according to Merehildo Grijalva, a Mexican captive living with the Chokonen, Cochise became chief after the death of the bellicose and incorrigible Miguel Narbona in the mid-1850s. Carro, another influential headman, died in the fall of 1857, a victim of poisoned rations received at Janos. Thus, by late 1857 Cochise was perhaps the dominant leader of his band.[4]

In the 1850s the Chiricahua Apaches consisted of four bands—Chihenne, Nednhi, Bedonkohe, and Chokonen. Within the Chokonen band were three distinct local groups. The most pacific and least in number was headed by Chepillo and Esquinaline (James Tevis, station keeper at Apache Pass, called him Esconolea), whose favorite camping areas were the Animas, Peloncillo, and Southern Chiricahua mountains.[5] The second local group, under the leadership of Parte, Chino,

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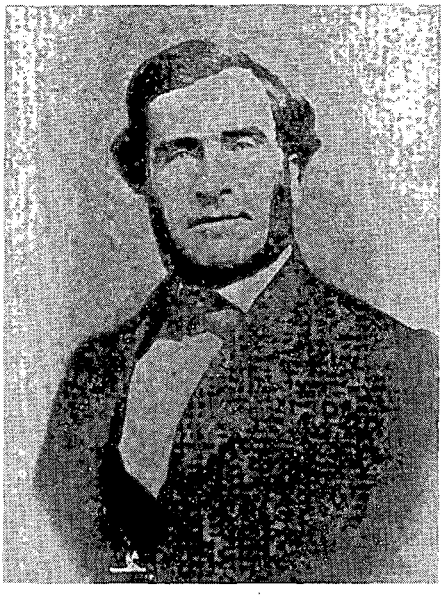
1. On the Bascom Affair, see Benjamin H. Sacks, "New Evidence on the Bascom Affair," *Arizona and the West*, 4 (Autumn 1962), 261–78; and Robert M. Utley, "The Bascom Affair: A Reconstruction," *Arizona and the West*, 3 (Spring 1961), 59–68.

2. In August 1870, for example, Cochise told Major John Green at Camp Mogollon that "he did not begin the war and only fought for revenge and self defense," *Alta California*, November 14, 1870; and in October 1872, Cochise informed General Oliver Otis Howard that "The worst place of all is Apache Pass. There five [six] Indians, one my brother, were murdered. Their bodies hung up, and kept there till they were skeletons. . . . I have retaliated with all my might." Oliver Otis Howard, *My Life and Experience Among Our Hostile Indians* (New York: De Capo Press, 1972), 208.

3. Utley, "The Bascom Affair," 59.

4. The Chokonen captured Merehildo about 1850 near Bacoachi, Sonora. Merehildo Grijalva, Hayden File, Arizona Historical Society; Elias Gonzalez to Governor, November 16, 1857, roll 19, Archivo Historico del Estado de Sonora, Arizona Historical Society.

5. James H. Tevis, *Arizona in the '50's* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1954), 100.



Dr. Michael Steck, the honest, indefatigable agent for the southern Apaches, from William A. Keleher, *Turmoil in New Mexico, 1846–1868* (Rydal Press, 1952). Courtesy University of New Mexico Press.

and Yaque, was more militant than the first and lived sometimes in northern Mexico. The Pitaicache and Teras mountains were among their favorite homelands. This group also roamed north occasionally into Arizona and the Apache Pass area. Cochise headed the third and most militant group (also largest in number). Their favorite camping sites remained the Apache Pass, Steins Peak, and Dragoon Mountains. The band totalled between six and seven hundred individuals.

Cochise's first recorded contact with Anglo-Americans came in the fall of 1858 at Apache Pass, and his first official meeting occurred there that December when he met Michael Steck. Born in 1818, Steck graduated from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1843. He arrived in New Mexico in 1849 as a contract surgeon with the army and in late 1854 was appointed agent for the Southern Apaches. He was an honest and able official, who was trusted by the Chiricahuas.[6] These contacts were significant because they signalled the beginning of Chokonen willingness to interact with Americans. This willingness was a product of two related conditions. The first included increased American presence in southern Arizona from mining in the Tubac area, establishment of Fort Buchanan some forty-five miles southwest of Tucson, and emergence of the Butterfield Overland Mail Company.

6. Dan L. Thrapp, *Victorio and the Mimbres Apaches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 332.

The second was Mexico's strengthening of frontier presidios in Sonora in late summer and early fall 1858—partly to discourage American expansionism and partly to inhibit Apache raiding.[7]

In addition, Chiricahua-Mexican relations had been declining since the Carrasco affair in March 1851, when a Sonoran force under the command of Colonel Jose Maria Carrasco attacked Chiricahua rancherias near Janos, killing twenty-one Indians and capturing another sixty-two. Relations turned bitterly hostile after the Chiricahuas were issued poisoned rations at Janos in 1857, then were trapped and slaughtered in a premeditated massacre at Fronteras in July 1858. By fall 1858, most Chiricahua bands had moved north of the border, including Cochise's group, which returned to Apache Pass.[8]

If William Hudson Kirkland's reminiscences are correct, Cochise showed a desire for peace in October 1858. Kirkland, one of Arizona's earliest pioneers, settled in the Sonoita Valley in the mid-1850s. On October 24, 1858 (Kirkland later remembered it as having occurred in the early 1860s), he was hauling wood from the Santa Rita Mountains when Cochise and twenty-five Apaches surrounded him and two of his men. Cochise punched him in the back with the blunt end of his lance and ordered the white men to prepare a meal for them. "I didn't know I could cook," Kirkland recalled, "but, by God, I found I could cook pretty well." After eating, Cochise let him go.[9]

Even if he was not the Indian involved in the Kirkland incident, Cochise had made contact with whites by fall 1858 at the Steins Peak or Apache Pass stage stations, constructed as part of the Butterfield Overland Mail route. The Butterfield Overland Mail Company succeeded James Birch's Jackass Mail Route, which had made some forty trips through Chokonen country between June 1857 and September

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7. Lieutenant Colonel Jose Juan Elias regarrisoned Sonora's northern frontier, distributing some 500 men as follows: 150 to Fronteras, 100 to Bavispe, 100 to a temporary fort located on the San Pedro, 75 to Santa Cruz, 50 to Himuris and 25 to serve as Elias' scouts. Jose Juan Elias to Governor, October 22, 1858, roll 50, Archivo Historico, AHS.

8. Edwin R. Sweeney, "I Had Lost All: Geronimo and the Carrasco Massacre of 1851," *Journal of Arizona History*, 27 (Spring 1986), 35–52; Thrapp, *Victorio*, 57; Elias Gonzalez to Governor, November 16, 1857, roll 19, Archivo Historico, AHS; *La Voz de Sonora*, July 23, 1858; San Diego *Herald*, September 18, 1858.

9. *Alta California*, November 9, 1858; Diane M. T. North, *Samuel Peter Heintzelman and the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 110; William H. Kirkland, Hayden File, AHS. Contemporary accounts attribute this incident to the White Mountain Apaches but, given Kirkland's and Tom Jeffords' reminiscences, there is a good chance of Cochise's involvement.

1858 without a single hostile encounter, primarily because Cochise was in northern Mexico for much of the time.[10]

During 1859 and 1860 Cochise's local group usually could be found camped at Cochise Canyon (now called Goodwin Canyon) about one mile north of the stage station at Apache Pass. From there, his warriors continued raiding, usually in Mexico but some of his over zealous young men occasionally stole stock from ranches north of the border—apparently against their leader's orders. In early December 1858 Cochise joined Mangas Coloradas for an incursion into Sonora. By mid-month "only the sick and disabled" warriors remained at Apache Pass. By December 26, Cochise was back at Apache Pass, probably instrumental in returning some mules stolen from the stage station by a few Chokonen. In fact, one chief, perhaps Cochise, declared that the Indians "would not molest the whites" as long as they did "not interfere with their incursions into Sonora."[11]

In New Mexico, Southern Apache Agent Steck, whose sincerity and honesty were unique in a government position noted for corruption and graft, had been informed of the Chokonen presence at Apache Pass. Possibly Mangas Coloradas, the powerful Chihenne leader in New Mexico, told Steck about the Chokonen. If not, either Steck or James Collins, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico, may have received the information from stage station personnel at Apache Pass.

On December 23, 1858, Steck left Fort Thorn, located on the west bank of the Rio Grande opposite Jornada del Muerto, for his first visit to Arizona. He had written James Tevis, the station keeper at Apache Pass, asking him to notify the Chokonen of his plans. En route he gave rations to the Chihennes at the Copper Mines and found them quiet and satisfied. From there he followed the Overland Mail route west 170 miles. Arriving at Apache Pass on December 30, he found "a band of Apaches called Janeros or Chilicagua [Chiricahua] Mountain Apaches with their chiefs Chees, [Cochise], Es-ken-el-a-ne [Esquinaline] and Fresco [Francisco], 50 men, 120 women and about 400 children, totalling 600." Steck believed "this band of Apaches had committed no depredations on the main emigrant road to California for the past two years and to encourage their continued good behavior" he issued them rations. Among the presents distributed were cattle, 20 fanegas of corn,

10. San Antonio *Daily Herald*, March 20, 1858; *Butterfield Overland Mail Across Arizona* (Tucson: Arizona Pioneers Historical Society, 1958), 9.

11. *Weekly Missouri Democrat*, January 7, 13, 1859.

211 blankets, 100 yards of manta, and 200 brass kettles. Cochise, no doubt, was pleased with the gifts and perceived the situation as a golden opportunity; he could raid into Mexico at will and live in safety at Apache Pass. The Americans would issue rations or presents as long as he caused no trouble north of the border.[12]

The indefatigable agent Steck continued west to Fort Buchanan, where he conferred with Captain Richard Stoddert Ewell, a seasoned veteran of the Southwest. Ewell informed Steck that on January 4 Apaches had stolen some horses from the vicinity of the Sonoita and Santa Cruz Rivers. As a result, Steck and Ewell decided to pay a visit to the Chokonen at Apache Pass. Before they did so, they met with the powerful Pinal and Coyotero Apache bands and provided them with rations, then returned east into Chiricahua country. They arived at Apache Pass on January 25.

Cochise was conciliatory in the presence of Ewell's troops and returned the stolen stock. He also released a Mexican captive, whom they had taken recently from San Ignacio, Sonora. Steck reminded Cochise and the other chiefs of the serious consequences of continued raiding and concluded "the chiefs seem well disposed and promised to exert themselves to maintain peace."[13] Steck and Ewell had done their job well, providing the right mixture of gift-giving and saber-rattling. As long as the Indians kept the peace in Arizona and New Mexico, citizens, military officers, and government agents were content. Such an attitude, reciprocated by Mexico when Apache bands lived in Sonora and Chihuahua, actually was not as hypocritical as appears. Americans were not yet formidable enough to prevent Apache forays into Mexico, and while tensions between the two countries remained high, many Southwesterners viewed the Mexicans with great antipathy. Although Steck did not condone such actions, he was as powerless as the military to prevent Apache depredations into Mexico.

Cochise's apparent perceptions of Americans and his attitude toward them at the time are revealing. He must have desired peace, even if nominally. But peace held a meaning different for Americans and Apaches. Apaches were accustomed to such agreements as those they

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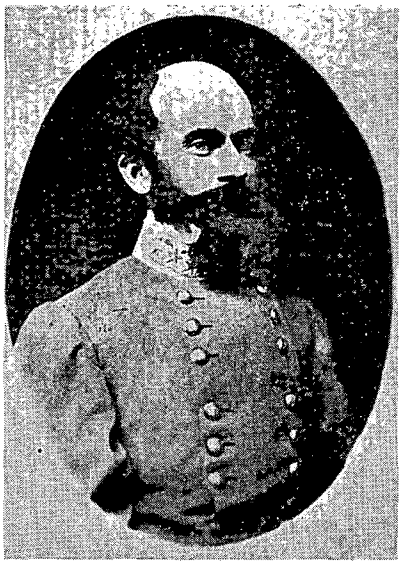
12. Michael Steck's estimate of fifty warriors was far too low. At the time of his visit, two Chiricahua parties were raiding in Sonora. One returned about January 5 with fifty mules and two Mexican women captives, while another party was reported to be out with Mangas Coloradas in Sonora, *Missouri Republican*, January 5, 12, 1859. Michael Steck to James Collins, February 1, 1859, envelope 8, Box 2, Michael Steck Papers, Special Collections, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico.

13. Steck to Collins, February 1, 1859, Steck Papers.

James Tevis, the stationkeeper at Apache Pass. Courtesy Arizona Historical Society.



Richard S. Ewell, as he appeared a few years later as a Confederate officer. Courtesy Arizona Historical Society.

traditionally formed in Sonora and Chihuahua, where authorities condoned and even tacitly encouraged depredations in other districts. Thus, Cochise no doubt saw advantages to a peace with the Americans. First came issuance of presents, or rations (which unbeknown to him would arrive semi-annually at this date, in marked contrast to the Mexican policy of weekly distributions). The Apaches then might continue their forays into Mexico and possibly find a market north of the border for their plunder. The American non-intervention policy was dictated by the nearest military post lying one hundred miles distant and the agent who would oversee them being two hundred miles away. Consequently, Cochise virtually had a free hand, and an occasional stock raid in either Arizona or New Mexico might go undetected.

In addition, Cochise's relationships with Steck, Captain Ewell, and station keeper Tevis were significant. The Chiricahuas desired the gifts Steck distributed and probably feared and respected Ewell's dragoons. At any rate, Cochise's people behaved themselves when in Steck's and Ewell's presence, although they showed less deference to Tevis and his stage personnel. Tevis never trusted Cochise, as he made clear in his memoirs. He characterized Cochise as "a very deceptive Indian.

At first appearance a man would think he was inclined to be peaceable to the Americans but he is far from it. For eight months I have watched him and have come to the conclusion that he is the biggest liar in the Territory! and would kill any American for any trifle, provided he thought it wouldn't be found out."[14] Tevis, who tended to exaggerate obviously did not think much of Cochise's character. Apaches scorned a liar, and Cochise's integrity with his people was beyond reproach. At this stage in his life, Americans could not command Cochise's complete respect. Consequently, his deportment toward them was honesty when it suited him.

But what was the true relationship between Cochise and the Americans? The legends and myths established in those early years must be dissected and analyzed. It has been written, for example, that Cochise "allowed" the mail line to operate through Chiricahua country. The Butterfield Overland Mail Company did establish its route without asking Chiricahua permission, and Cochise could have attacked and perhaps wiped out the stage stations at any time. He was no doubt aware of the advantages of peace, however, and may even have considered the possibility of troop retaliation against any such effort. He often seemed to hold the stage personnel at Apache Pass in contempt, sometimes blustering against their operations. More than once Apaches piled rocks across the route to impede movement of the stages, although Cochise may or may not have had anything to do with such playfulness. Historians and other writers have generally ignored the matter.

In addition, two oft-repeated legends would seem to support Cochise's early friendliness toward white interlopers. He supplied the stage station with wood and hay, perhaps under contract, and he prevented attacks on stages, even killing four Apaches in spring 1859 when they dared violate his rule. Both incidents lack supporting documentary evidence, but the station had to obtain hay and wood somewhere, and it would be routine for Cochise's women to bring it in—as was done in similar circumstances elsewhere—with no record of such an agreement being preserved. John Cremony does not mention the practice, nor does Tevis. John G. Bourke wrote in 1891, however, that "old timers have often told me that the great chief, Cocheis [sic] had the wood contract for supplying the 'station' . . . with fuel."[15] Thomas E. Farish, in his 1915 *History of Arizona*, repeated Bourke's

14. *Weekly Arizonian*, July 14, 1859.

15. John G. Bourke, *On The Border With Crook* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 119.

account, writing that Cochise "had a contract . . . for supplying [the station] with wood . . . ," although he failed to give his source. This information, which might well be factual, has been accepted by Woodworth Clum, Paul Wellman, Ralph Ogle and other writers. Nor is there evidence for Cochise having killed four Apaches who caused trouble along the mail route, although the story apparently originated with John Clum. Cochise and Esquinaline both offered to overlook the mail route, but there is no record of them fighting other Apaches to protect the Butterfield operation.[16]

On the surface, Cochise's attitude seemed friendly. He reportedly told his warriors that if the mail were left alone, the white soldiers would adopt a laissez-faire attitude toward other things, a sort of Anglo adaption of the Mexican viewpoint.[17] More than once he returned stolen stock to Americans, certainly evidence of his desire for good relations. In Apache practice, anyone could steal stock but only a chief, if he were sufficiently forceful and respected, might demand the animals from the thieves and do what he wished with them. In Cochise's case, he returned the animals to their proper owners. One such occasion occurred in the summer of 1859. Returning from a retaliatory campaign against Fronteras, Cochise found that a raid had been committed a few weeks earlier for which he doubtless would be blamed. Consequently, he decided to visit Fort Buchanan and explain his innocence, according to what he told Tevis.[18] Shortly afterward a band of about twenty Indians stole some 80 to 90 horses and mules from the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company near Patagonia. Captain Isaac Van Duzer Reeve believed the Chokonen were guilty and ordered Ewell to follow them, but their trail was wiped out by a heavy rain. Ewell nevertheless concluded that the thieves were Cochise's people—as indeed they were. The leader of the party was Parte, a local Chokonen group leader well known in northern Mexico.[19]

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16. Thomas Edwin Farish, *History of Arizona*, (8 vols., San Francisco: Filmer Brothers Electrotype Company, 1915–1918), 2:30; Woodworth Clum, *Apache Agent: The Story of John P. Clum* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 33–34; Paul I. Wellman, *The Indian Wars of the West* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1947), 288–89, 296–97; Ralph Hedrick Ogle, *Federal Control of the Western Apaches, 1848–1886* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970), 44; John Upton Terrell, *Apache Chronicle* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1974), 218–19; Dan L. Thrapp, *The Conquest of Apacheria* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 15–17.

17. *Missouri Republican*, September 16, 1859.

18. *Weekly Arizonian*, July 14, 1859.

19. Isaac Van Duzer Reeve to John Wilkins, July 20, 1859, Letters Received, Department of New Mexico, R30-1859, Record Group (RG) 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

When the men from Cochise's group returned with their loot, he insisted that it be returned. Some of the men may have resisted his imperious order. Grijalva, who was with the Chokonen at the time, reported that Cochise became so incensed that he not only seized the livestock but killed a warrior who defied him.[20] He then sent two of his men to Fort Buchanan with eleven of the animals. On July 21, Captain Reeve wrote his superiors:

> This morning two Chiricahua Indians of Chees [Cochise] came in and brough [sic] (11) eleven of the stolen animals.
> This band was encamped on the San Pedro and Chees, having heard of the robbery sent and took these animals and sent them in. He sent word that he would try and get all that had been stolen. He says they were stolen by a band of Chiricahuas headed by a chief named "Parte" that they supposed when they took them that they were in Sonora and that the animals belong to Mexicans.

Reeve added, "Chees appears to be acting in good faith, prompted somewhat, I doubt not, by my visit to the Chiricahua Mountains in search of a site for a post."[21]

Reeve may have correctly assessed Cochise's respect for his troops. The chief also may have believed that Ewell could trace the animals to his band, hence his prudent decision to return the stock. Cochise's desire to avoid conflict with Americans seems confirmed in a conversation between Grijalva and John Spring, a soldier in Arizona in the 1860s. Grijalva said that in the late 1850s the Chiricahuas, while continuing their raids into Mexico, "had strict orders never to lay hands on anybody or anything within the boundary of the United States." Such a conclusion is supported by another report in 1865, which maintained that although Cochise was unable to restrain his warriors from raiding during the 1850s, he did not want war with Americans.[22]

Throughout the summer and fall 1859 Cochise maintained friendly relations with Americans. After restoring the stolen stock he and most of the Chokonen headed straight for the Chiricahua Mountains to gather acorns and pinon nuts for winter. Only Esquinaline's following remained at Apache Pass, where in mid-August he met Samuel Cozzens, a lawyer from Mesilla. In his youth Esquinaline had been a bold warrior who had led his tribesmen on raids against Mexico. Now, in

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20. Merehildo Grijalva, Fred Hughes Collection, Arizona Historical Society.

21. Reeve to Wilkins, July 21, 1859, R31-1859, Letters Received, RG 393.

22. A. M. Gustafson, ed., *John Spring's Arizona* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1966), 52; "N. S. Higgins Report on Apaches," manuscript 180, Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

his mature years, he had learned moderation and wisdom. Cozzens described Esquinaline as "rather a good looking specimen of an Apache, about 60 years old and speaks Spanish, very imperfectly." Cozzens ended his letter with a revealing statement, if true, that "the Chiricahua Indians declare themselves friendly to whites and willing to protect the mail company."[23] Esquinaline's statement would be echoed by Cochise some three months later.

By October Cochise had returned to Apache Pass, intending to winter in its vicinity. On November 6, 1859, Steck arrived with his semi-annual load of rations, which were distributed to some 400 Apaches. Steck found the Chokonen were "very friendly and were gratified for their presents." Cochise returned three stolen animals to Steck and "promised to watch over the interest of the Overland Mail and travellers upon the great thoroughfare to California that passed directly through his country."[24] Perhaps Cochise was sincere in his offer to watch over the mail route; he would make similar promises in 1872, and his conduct proved his words genuine. But impending events would soon make his pledge meaningless.

Chokonen stock raids within Arizona were a long-standing problem and would lead eventually to minor skirmishes and bloodshed. About the time Steck was giving rations to the Chokonen, Captain Reeve, in command of a temporary camp on the San Pedro River, was ordered to mount a campaign against Cochise's people. Concerned about the mixed signals given the Indians, Reeve wrote:

> Department Special Orders Number 121 suggests a scout against the Chiricahua Indians. Since the publication of that order the Indian agent Dr. Steck, has visited these Indians, has distributed presents to them, met with and treated them in all respects as faithful friends. It is well known that they have often stolen during the past half year. . . . They are responsible for about 24 animals stolen in July last from the Arivaca mine, belonging to the Sonora Exploring and Mining Co.—also 5 animals stolen from Patagonia mine. I cannot make an expedition against these Indians with the means left in my possession after another scout against the Pinals; and shall therefore await further instructions on this subject.[25]

Another report from Tucson warned of increasing raids below the border originating from Apache Pass. "These Indians [Chokonen] are

23. *Missouri Republican*, August 29, 1859.
24. Steck to Collins, November 25, 1859, Steck Papers.
25. Reeve to Wilkins, November 27, 1859, R57-1859, Letters Received, RG 393.

almost continually on the warpath, they are better armed than the Pinals, having a great many firearms which have been given to them in exchange for their spoils steeped in the blood of Sonora."[26] Cochise's people apparently were finding a market at Apache Pass to dispose of the stock and booty they obtained from raids in Mexico.

In January 1860 several events militated against a continuation of the precarious armistice between Chiricahuas and Americans. First, a station keeper named John Wilson killed one of Cochise's Mexican captives, a boy named Jose, in a fair fight. Tevis recalled that Cochise "growled considerably" about the outcome, but when Tevis explained that "Wilson was in the right . . . that was the end of it."[27] But then Grijalva, with Tevis' assistance, escaped to Mesilla and found employment with Dr. Steck. If the former incident did not bother Cochise, the latter certainly did.[28]

Compounding these events were two other incidents in late 1859 that marked the beginning of true Chokonen-Anglo hostilities. On two occasions Americans were compelled to kill Chokonen raiders. Describing one incident in which Apache blood was spilled, Tevis said, Cochise craved revenge after Americans on the Sonoita River near Patagonia killed a Chokonen in the act of stealing a horse. Cochise, Tevis added, was so incensed that he ordered his Indians to kill anyone who went for water at Apache Springs. Tevis may have been exaggerating, however, because no one was killed for that reason, and Tevis himself defied Cochise's purported order and obtained water from the springs when it was needed.[29]

More serious was an encounter in December 1859 when Chiricahuas ran off some mules from the ranch of Thomas Smith in Sonora, thirty miles below the border. Smith pursued the raiders with some of his men, overtook them near Santa Cruz and, in a running fight, killed three and recovered his stock.[30] The leader of the raid, an "old chief" on his return to Apache Pass, confessed that he had thought Mexicans were pursuing him or he would not have stopped to fight. This may

26. Sylvester Mowry to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, February 6, 1860, Letters Received, M-169, RG 75, National Archives, Washington D.C.

27. Tevis, *Arizona in the 50's*, 170. John Cremony wrote that the boy Wilson killed was an Apache, and that Cochise declared that "no blame could be attached to anyone." Tevis, who was there, should have known. If the boy was an Apache, there would certainly have been some type of retaliation. The fact that he was a Mexican probably prevented immediate retribution. John Cremony, "Some Savages," *Overland Monthly*, 8 (March 1872).

28. Tevis, *Arizona in the 50's*, 168–69.

29. *Ibid.*, 138–40.

30. *Missouri Republican*, December 23, 1859.

have been Cochise, who at the time was sometimes referred to as an "old chief," but more likely it was old Plume.[31] Smith's action worsened Chiricahua-Anglo relations. Recapturing his stolen stock was one thing, but killing three warriors was another. In the Apache way, family and friends of the slain undoubtedly cried for revenge, which posed a problem for Cochise.

The Apache Pass stage people were first to feel increased pressure. From Tubac it was reported on January 14, 1860, that the "friendly Indians at Apache Pass had given intimations of extensive preparations for the total extermination of the Overland Mail line through their country, to be followed by a descent upon the settlements," a gloomy prediction often echoed in the frontier press even though Indian attacks on white settlements north of the border were rare. The writer, Thompson Turner, lawyer and sometime newsman, continued that "if they decide upon this step they can with ease massacre the men at the stations and seize the exchange horses." Even if Turner never had seen an Apache, and there is no evidence he had, his small-town gossip probably seemed valid to his Midwestern readers.[32]

In any event, Cochise grew disenchanted with Americans by early 1860 and moved against the mail line. On January 16 Chokonen raiders seized forty head of stock from Mexicans between San Simon and Apache Pass. According to reports, none of the Mexicans was hurt. In late January, Indians attacked two of Charles Hayden's freight wagons at Apache Pass, killing a couple of oxen. Hayden's men then refused to leave the station for Patagonia unless they received protection, and Ewell was prevailed upon to send them an escort. Other Apaches accused Cochise's people of the raids. Talking peace with the Americans, the Pinal Apaches asserted that the Chokonen, with help from the Coyoteros, had done nearly all the stealing thereabouts. Even if the Pinal Apaches were dissembling in part, they should be given some credence. By mid-March relations between Apaches and Americans were so deteriorated that Ewell reported the Indians were depredating everywhere, and "no Apache tribe that I know of is guiltless of these constant robberies."[33]

Cochise had plenty of outlets for his growing belligerence, if that

31. John Walker to Collins, January 4, 1860, Records of New Mexico Superintendency of Indian Affairs, T-21, roll 4, RG 75, National Archives.

32. Constance Wynn Altshuler, ed., *Latest From Arizona! The Hesperian Letters, 1859–1861* (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 1969), 27.

33. Charles Hayden to Richard Stoddert Ewell, January 30, 1860, Ewell to Wilkins, February 1, 1860, Letters Received, 4E, and Ewell to Wilkins, March 17, 1860, Letters Received, 12E, RG 393.

is what it was. In late winter 1860 he led a war party into Sonora, striking terror as they went. He was not alone. That month alone Apaches slaughtered more than 50 men, women, and children in the Mexican state, but many of the killings undoubtedly could be attributed to Cochise. The raiders concentrated their efforts southeast of Ures at Soyopa, Tonichi, Sahuaripa, and Alamos. At Tonichi and Soyopa, Indians killed thirteen Mexicans before vanishing into the inaccessible Sierra Madre. A particularly sanguinary combat between Indians and Mexicans took place in late March. Cochise was returning from Sonora with about 100 warriors when, about seventy-five miles below the Arizona border, they ambushed and killed four travellers on the road between Cucurpe and San Ignacio. The next day a party of 50 nationals under Angel Elias pursued the Chiricahuas to the summit of a hill. At Elias' urging the troops charged up the hill. The Chiricahuas swarmed out like angry hornets, killing eleven soldiers at close range, most by the lance. One wounded man was left on the battlefield to a fate of certain death—perhaps by torture. Cochise claimed seven more victims later that day.[34]

A week later on April 7, the Chokonen stole some stock from the Dragoon Springs stage station in Arizona. According to Samuel Cozzens, present at the time of the raid, the Americans suspected Cochise of the theft. Next day he inquired of Cochise about the incident and from the chief's ambiguous reply, concluded that Cochise had led the raid. Meanwhile, the Chokonen again were raiding the Tubac area and threatening a major outbreak. In mid-May a "friendly Apache" reminded the station keeper at Apache Pass that "it was the intention of the Indians to clean out the station."[35] Two weeks later, Cochise's people ran off the entire herd of the Santa Rita Silver Mining Company near Tubac. Captain Ewell trailed the thieves to the Chiricahua Mountains and in early June parlayed with the "principal" chief, probably Cochise, and compelled him to return some of the stolen stock. The Apaches claimed to have eaten the remainder. They proposed, however, to compensate Ewell for the number of mules they had consumed, and the officer agreed to return in late June to receive the balance. While Ewell conferred with the Chiricahuas, Apaches stole some mules at Tubac, although the Chief, probably Cochise, "disclaimed all knowledge of it." Cochise may have been truthful here. The Apache leader

34. *Missouri Republican*, May 8, 1860; *Estrella de Occidente*, April 6, 13, 1860.

35. *Missouri Republican*, May 2, June 3, 1860; Samuel Woodworth Cozzens, *The Marvellous Country: Three Years in Arizona and New Mexico* (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1876), 222–24.

conceded that a robbery had been committed by the Chihennes, and that the Chokonen overtook this party and seized two of the mules in order to hand them over to Ewell. The remainder of the animals had been traded to Mexicans, he said, or had died along the route. The two mules indeed proved to be among those stolen from Tubac, and Ewell restored them to their owners. In Ewell's opinion, "the perpetrators of this Tubac robbery . . . were strongly in favor of having been done by these same Indians [Chokonen]."[36]

On June 25, Ewell and a detachment of 75 men left Fort Buchanan for Apache Pass. Five days later they met the Chokonen, who returned some of the required stock. But the agent of the Santa Rita Mining Company refused to receive five of them as "not being of sufficiently good quality." The Apaches insisted these were the best they could offer. An incredulous Ewell decided to examine the Chiricahua Mountains to search for Apache stock because, "it is generally supposed that these Indians have large herds of fine stock." After eight days of fruitless searching, the officer concluded that the Indians possessed little or no stock and that he "was satisfied that they had done all in their power to meet the demand." Such incidents of Chokonen raiding led inevitably to American distrust of Cochise's people and a gradual assumption that if stock were taken, the Chokonen were guilty.[37] This perception would have serious overtones in the coming months.

Ewell's report to headquarters was unusually long for him. Apparently some "amateurs" were at Apache Pass who disagreed vehemently with his handling of the affair. Letters were written to the *Alta California* and *Missouri Republican* criticizing "Old Baldy" for not attacking the Chiricahuas. In his report Ewell defended his policy of negotiating. After all, he had received some of the stolen stock and any attack would have been in violation of a truce. Nevertheless, he promised that in the event of another theft he would not ask for restitution but would strike "an effective blow."[38]

Ewell's visits meanwhile, intensified the uneasiness between the two races. Immediately after his first visit, on June 17, a large number of Chokonen appeared at the Apache Pass station, well armed and painted, to notify the men at the station to quit under threat of being cleaned out. At Ewell's second meeting with the Chokonen he had ominously noted that only 150 Chokonen remained at Apache Pass.

36. Ewell to Dabney Maury, July 24, 1860, 22E, Letters Received, RG 393.

37. *Ibid.*; Altshuler, *Latest from Arizona*, 105.

38. *Missouri Republican*, July 22, 1860; *Alta California*, July 4, 1860; Ewell to Maury, July 24, 1860, 22E, Letters Received, RG 393.

Many had cleared out, probably moving to Janos and Corralitos in northern Chihuahua, where it was reported on June 12 that ten Chiricahua leaders had sought peace.[39] These reports were the first indication that some Apaches were again ready to deal with Mexico, although Mangas Coloradas remained in New Mexico, and the more militant Cokonen under Cochise were still in Arizona. They no doubt recalled the poisoned rations received at Janos in summer of 1857, and though dissatisfied with American treatment, awaited results of their relatives' efforts in Mexico.

In June 1860, one Chokonen local group had begun discussions with Chino (who had been at Apache Pass), representing Yaque's local group. Their main complaint against the Americans was the paucity and infrequency of rations and presents. Consequently, they sought greener pastures in Mexico. At Janos they resumed negotiations with their sometime adversary and sometime friend, Jose Maria Zuloaga, probably the wealthiest and most influential man in northwestern Chihuahua.[40]

Zuloaga was a pragmatic man who adapted to circumstances. Triumphantly he announced "it is our good fortune that we did not request peace, they [Apaches] have solicited the peace and they must adhere to the conditions." He also enviously wrote Governor Ignacio Pesqueira in Sonora that those Apaches living in security across the border were "enriching themselves" by robbing and killing in Mexico. He suggested that the only way to inhibit Apache raids was to keep them under close scrutiny, and the only way to prevent depopulation of the frontier was to declare an armistice. Zuloaga obviously sensed an opportunity to remove the Chiricahuas from U.S. influence and back to Mexico, a tug of war which existed from the time the Mexican War ended in 1848 through the Geronimo Wars of the 1880s. Furthermore he hoped that Pesqueira would create similar peace establishments in Sonora. He believed fifteen hundred Apaches would come in for rations and indicated other bands would eventually participate.[41]

Cochise held his people aloof, apparently remaining encamped at Apache Pass throughout the summer and fall of 1860. He, too, had grown disenchanted with the Americans, particularly with the trivial amount of government assistance. According to Steck's "Abstracts of Provisions," he had issued rations to Cochise's people on March 31, 1860, but Steck was actually east on personal business and Cochise

39. *Alta California*, July 4, 25, 1860; *Estrella de Occidente*, June 29, 1860.
40. *Estrella de Occidente*, July 6, 1860; *La Coalicion*, September 4, 1860.
41. *Ibid.*

This Apache village scene at San Carlos was photographed by Ben Wittick in 1885. It is quite similar to village life in the time of Cochise. Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, negative 15873.

was raiding in Sonora. Thus, there was a good chance they were never issued. By August even the pacific Esquinaline deserted Apache Pass for Fronteras, Sonora, where on the last day of the month a woman from his camp requested a truce. The woman declared that the Chokonen were dissatisfied with the Americans at Apache Pass. She was sent by several Apache leaders, including Parte, at the time living near Janos, and Delgadito, the Chihenne chief who had fled New Mexico because of white encroachment on his country.[42]

Cochise's participation in all of this is uncertain but hardly improbable. With Apache-Anglo relations deteriorating, and with the fact that other Chokonen local groups had forsaken Apache Pass for Mexico, and finally, in view of portending events, the possibility of Cochise's involvement in the peace talks certainly seems plausible. Sonora eagerly grasped the Chokonen offer. Captain Gabriel Garcia, who was involved in the massacre of July 1858, requested instructions from Pesqueria, who replied favorably that "Fronteras is a satisfactoary place to administer the peace . . . treat the Apaches, who have asked for peace, well." By early October a small band of forty-six Indians under Esquinaline and Delgadito settled near Fronteras to test the truce. To prove their sincerity they gave their weapons to Garcia although they probably relinquished only unserviceable or obsolete firearms. Both races had learned from experience that it was foolhardy to trust the other completely.[43]

Meanwhile, Steck had completed his arrangements for a proposed Apache reservation, which was to congregate the Bedonkohe, Chihenne, and Chokonen bands with the Mescaleros at Santa Lucia Springs, in the heart of Mangas Coloradas' country in southwestern New Mexico. He had first considered this idea the previous November. American complaints from Apache Pass about Chokonen disturbances probably encouraged his decision to place them with the others whose territory was experiencing increased mining activity. The previous March he had journeyed east for personal reasons and conferred with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs about his plan. The reservation would be fifteen miles square and was to include a rich and fertile valley large enough to accommodate several Chiricahua groups as well as the Mescaleros from east of the Rio Grande.[44]

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42. Prefect of Arispe to Governor, September 2, 1860, folder 354, Archivo Historico del Estado de Sonora, Hermosillo, Sonora (AHSH).

43. Prefect of Arispe to Governor, September 2, October 16, 1860, folder 354, AHSH.

44. Steck to Alfred Greenwood, May 11, 14, 1860, M234, roll 547, RG 75. The reservation would have included the present communities of Gila, Cliff, and Buckhorn, all

Subsequent developments were to force a change in Steck's plan, and the Santa Lucia Reservation never became a reality. Cochise likely would have objected to relocating in Chihenne territory. By fall of 1860 many Chiricahua groups had grown increasingly hostile, and some had relocated to northern Mexico. Even Steck felt the brunt of Apache raids. In mid-October 1860 Apaches reportedly drove off his mules when enroute to Santa Lucia.[45] Other reports from Tubac and Fort Buchanan suggested that the Apaches depredated because they were starving. More ominously, however, their activities had become more than just occasional stock raids; they had killed a few Americans. Lieutenant Colonel Pitcairn Morrison, Fort Buchanan's new commander, wrote to his superiors complaining about the depredations, his want of troops, especially cavalry, and his lack of a good guide. Morrison concluded: "I cannot see any other course to pursue than to feed [the Indians] or exterminate them."[46]

Conditions deteriorated further in late 1860 when Steck was elected territorial delegate for Arizona. Like Sylvester Mowry before him, Steck was not seated, pending formal organization of Arizona Territory. Before leaving for Washington, Steck probably met Cochise about November 10 at Apache Pass, where the Chiricahuas received their semi-annual supplies. Little is known of Cochise's activities at this time, but the growing number of Apaches appearing at Janos and Fronteras to make peace reflected resentment toward Americans. Among them were many of Cochise's associates. A month after receiving Steck's rations, Cochise sent a clear signal that he also wished relations at Fronteras. On December 9, 1860, Chiquito Teboca with his family of two women, four children, two men, and an Indian woman named Yones and her nine-year-old son, arrived at Fronteras seeking peace and rations for Cochise's following.[47] Yones was the wife of Coyuntura (Kin-o-tero), Cochise's daredevil brother. Coyuntura's reputation was high among the Indians. He had a following of eighteen warriors and "was never known to go on an expedition without bringing back stock. . . . He was more dreaded in Sonora than the captains of any band of Apaches."[48] The ponderous Mexican bureacracy did not inform Pesqueira of their

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northwest of Silver City, with the boundary line going north almost to Shelly Park, and west to near Jackson on present U.S. Highway 180. Its southern boundary would have touched Bald Knoll, Thrapp, *Victorio*, 65–66.

45. Altshuler, *Latest from Arizona*, 136.

46. *Ibid.*, 147–48; Pitcairn Morrison to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of New Mexico, October 27, November 10, 1860, M46–1860, Letters Received, RG 393.

47. Prefect of Arispe to Governor, December 23, 1860, folder 354, AHSH.

48. "Higgins Report," Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution.

arrival for two weeks and by the time Pesqueira replied, Chokonen patience had worn thin.

In early January 1861 Captain Garcia received permission from Pesqueira to give rations to Cochise's band.[49] But it was too late. If the governor's reply had come a little earlier, a whole era of American-Apache conflict and Chokonen vengenance raids might not have occurred, and Cochise's people might have remained in northern Sonora. This is not to suggest that the Apaches' already strained relations with Americans might not have resulted in eventual conflict. Raiding probably would have continued under any circumstance, but it might not have been as severe as the devastation that hit Arizona in the spring and summer of 1861. Cochise had not waited for the governor's reply. By January he was back at Apache Pass destined to be involved in one of the most significant and controversal incidents in Anglo-Apache history—the infamous confrontation with Lieutenant Bascom.

49. Ignacio Pesqueira to Prefect of Arispe, December 28, 1860, folder 354, AHSH.